



“The View from the Forge”
A Monthly Podcast of the News & Events at Valley Forge NHP
June 2007

Hello, my name is Mike Caldwell, Superintendent of Valley Forge National Historical Park. I'd like to welcome you to “The View from the Forge” – a monthly podcast of news and events from Valley Forge National Historical Park. Here with this month's edition is park volunteer, John Grossman.

The Grand Parade Ground is lower than the surrounding areas because of the type of Hiking on Valley Forge National Historical Park's 30-mile system of trails is one of the most popular activities at the park. Volunteers with the Delaware Valley Chapter of the Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC), the oldest nonprofit conservation and recreation organization in the U.S., have been a key part of maintaining trails on Mount Joy and Mount Misery for years. Now, to step up these ongoing efforts, the park and the AMC have signed a formal ten-year partnership agreement. AMC volunteers and the National Park Service will partner on trail maintenance, rehabilitation, stabilization, and resource protection projects on the Mount Joy and the Mount Misery trail systems. Through this agreement, the park looks forward to working with AMC to further engage the community through stewardship opportunities, guided hikes, special events, and educating the public about the value of trail preservation. Additionally, AMC will provide volunteer-training opportunities to increase involvement in trail stewardship in the park. Volunteer activities will be organized through the AMC Delaware Valley Trails Committee, and follow AMC's leadership requirements and guidelines. For more information, contact the park's volunteer coordinator, Ernestine White, through the park website.

Valley Forge National Historical Park is collaborating with the Friends of Valley Forge Park, Unilever Corporation and others to enhance and improve the popular network of trails throughout the park. Through the just-completed General Management Plan, the public made it very clear that the park's trails are one of its most important features. The trails network serves visitors in many ways, whether they are exploring the history of the park, exercising, or simply relaxing. Through a combination of direct funding and volunteer labor, the park will invest \$235,000 in the 30-mile system of trails in 2007.

The funding comprises \$120,000 in federal funds, \$50,000 in donations from several organizations including the Friends of Valley Forge Park, the Encampment Store, Unilever Corporation's Healthy Parks / Healthy Living initiative, Valley Forge Convention and Visitors Bureau, O'Neill Properties, and participants of the 2nd Annual Revolutionary Run, plus an estimated \$65,000 in volunteer hours provided by park

volunteers and partner groups such as the Appalachian Mountain Club and the Sierra Club. A significant portion of the funding will be targeted to the restoration and rehabilitation of some of the park's most heavily used trails— Mount Joy Trail, Horse Shoe Trail, Chapel Trail, River Trail, and the Joseph Plumb Martin Trail. \$20,000 of the federal funding will be used to hire a Public Lands crew of eight people. The crew will work with park employees to restore the River Trail on the north side of the park and to develop a new hiking trail that will lead visitors from the huts at the Muhlenberg Brigade out to the Grand Parade and eventually meet up with the Joseph Plumb Martin Trail. These funds represent the first year of a three-year federal grant won by the park. The park also will participate in a new Trails Ambassador program being developed by the Schuylkill River National Heritage Area for the Schuylkill River Trail, in which the park will recruit volunteers who will walk the trail to provide information to visitors and promote safe use.

The summer season is here and there are more things to do at the park than ever before! In addition to the tours and activities already available, here are five new fun and educational activities. All of them are great for adults *and* kids.

- Take a load off at a Once Upon a Nation Storytelling Bench. These benches are guaranteed to educate and entertain. You can find them in three locations around the park—at the Welcome Center, at the National Memorial Arch, and at Washington's Headquarters. Storytellers, trained at Once Upon A Nation's unique month-long Benstitute, share riveting stories of the encampment, and how it became a turning point in the Revolutionary War. Short, five-minute stories are told to anyone who comes to visit one of the signature 13-foot curved Once Upon A Nation benches.

- Another new program is "Valley Forge: After Hours." You can spend an intimate evening in a historic setting with key figures of the Valley Forge Encampment, such as General George Washington and Alexander Hamilton. Begin at the park Welcome Center and be transported by trolley to Washington's Headquarters for a picnic supper. Continue with a campfire on the Grand Parade, where Continental soldiers will tell tales of the winter. The program runs Saturdays through September 1 at 5:30pm and run 3 hours. There is a fee charged.

- Also new this year is a 90-minute bike tour of Valley Forge on Saturdays and Sundays at 11:00am. Hear about the park's vital natural history, and find out why these features led General Washington to choose Valley Forge for the Continental Army's six-month encampment in the winter of 1777-78. Tours depart from the main Welcome Center parking lot, adjacent to the bike rental facility.

- Make sure to join a gallery talk. You can wiggle your way into 18th century clothing, touch and learn about artifacts discovered in a recent archeological dig, or think kind thoughts about your own physician's medical training as you handle surgical tools and hear about medical practices during the encampment. Talks take place at the Welcome Center gallery Monday through Friday at 10:00am, 12noon, and 2:00pm.

- Valley Forge is one of the best places in the region to spot birds. Meet a naturalist to hear more. Bring your own binoculars or use ours. Saturdays from June 9 through August 11, from 9:00am to 1:00pm. Park at the von Steuben statue parking lot on Route 23 and follow the path to the tent near Varnum's Quarters.

For additional program information visit our Welcome Center or go on line at www.nps.gov/vafo.

Finally this month, we're excited to tell you that a species new to the park has been found! One adult sora (*Porzana carolina*) was photographed in the large Walnut Hill pond on May 15 by volunteer Bill Moses. This species of waterbird is often heard but rarely seen because it spends most of its time hiding in the dense vegetation of wetlands. Viewing a sora in its natural habitat is a well won prize for an avid birder.

That's all for this month's "View from the Forge." As always, for more information visit the park's website at www.nps.gov/vafo. Please come back next month for a new edition of "View from the Forge". This is park volunteer John Grossman. Thanks for listening and we'll see you in the park!